



PRESS RELEASE

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Fall in Love With *Love Letters*

GEM Theatrics, the husband and wife acting team of Gary E. Mitchell and Mary Beth Quillin presents A. R. Gurney's *Love Letters*. Through the time-honored tradition of letter writing, audiences meet Andy and Melissa and follow their love affair from second grade through college; as they grow apart and marry others, still maintaining a relationship across the miles. Spanning the years 1937 - 1984, this story will resonate with those who remember the Great Depression, WWII, the Cold War Years and the crazy '60's and '70's. Gurney's performance piece is considered a rite of passage for most acting couples and was nominated in 1990 for a Pulitzer Prize in Drama. It opened on Broadway in October of 1989 with an opening night cast of Colleen Dewhurst and Jason Robards. In the play's long history, many notables have performed the roles of Andrew Makepeace Ladd III and Melissa Gardner, childhood friends whose lifelong correspondence begins with birthday thank you notes in second grade. The New York Times' Mel Gussow calls the play "an evocative epistolary account" and Coral Andrews of Playwrights and Stage Actors goes on to say, "The most poignant element of Gurney's piece is the story between the lines, the words Andy and Melissa cannot bring themselves to write."

Gary E. Mitchell is a Grand-Award winning actor who has appeared on many Grand Rapids, MI stages, including Actors' Theatre, Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, Jewish Theatre Grand Rapids, and Heritage Theatre Group. An educator, Gary teaches at Davenport University and Thomas M. Cooley Law School, and has also taught acting classes at the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre. Favorite shows include *1776*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Lost In Yonkers*, *The Rainmaker*, and *Conversations With My Father*. He has appeared as a guest artist in Grand Valley State University's Shakespeare Festival productions of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Mary Beth Quillin is an actor, teacher, storyteller and director who has also appeared on the stages of the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, Actors' Theatre, Jewish Theatre Grand Rapids, Community Circle Theatre and Heritage Theatre Group. Favorite shows include *Enchanted April*, *Top Girls* and *Talking With*. Directing credits include the World Premiere of *Four Wounded Women*, by Grand Rapids, MI playwright Michael Smolinski, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* at East Grand

Rapids High School, and *Becoming Dr. Ruth* at Jewish Theatre Grand Rapids. She can be seen in the award-winning web series *Lucky Jay* at www.luckyjayseries.com.

Together they have appeared in *Old Love, My Dearest Friend, Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Stephen Vincent Benet's Stories of America, Sight Unseen, Macbeth, and Communicating Doors*.

Penelope Notter, former Associate Director at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, directed the original production and says, "This dynamic acting couple's interpretation of *Love Letters* will touch your heart, amuse you and may bring a tear to your eye."

Love Letters is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.